

Epidemiologic Surveillance Program

Where do I get more information?

Questions about this program or issues related to worker health can be addressed to:

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Epidemiologic Surveillance Program

What is Epidemiologic Surveillance?

As a contractor employee, your health is important to the Department of Energy (DOE). DOE has the responsibility to see that work is safely conducted at every site. Information on illness and injury is one way to evaluate how safely we work.

The Epidemiologic Surveillance Program began as a pilot project in the mid-1980s. The pilot project became a DOE Headquarters-based program in 1992.

Epidemiologic Surveillance monitors and assesses the overall health of the current work force, with the goal of identifying those groups that may be at increased risk for occupational injury and illness. This goal is accomplished through the collection, analysis, and interpretation of selected health data. Surveillance results provide an opportunity to apply intervention strategies to reduce illness or injury among the work force.

Who is responsible for monitoring the health of current DOE workers?

DOE has the legislative authority to monitor the impact of its operations on the health of its work force. The Office of Health Studies at DOE Headquarters manages the Epidemiologic Surveillance Program. The program funds occupational medicine departments at participating sites to support the collection of selected health data used to monitor worker health.

The Epidemiologic Surveillance Program staff have advanced graduate degrees from accredited Schools of Public Health at respected United States universities. They are experienced and dedicated health professionals who are committed to worker health protection.

Who is covered by the Epidemiologic Surveillance Program?

Currently, health trends are assessed among more than 70,000 workers at 14 DOE sites and facilities. Site participation is voluntary. Workers at the following sites are included in the program:

- Brookhaven National Laboratory
- East Tennessee Technology Park
- Fernald Environmental Management Project
- Hanford Site
- Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory
- Kansas City Plant
- Los Alamos National Laboratory
- Nevada Test Site
- Oak Ridge National Laboratory
- Pantex Plant
- Sandia National Laboratories
- Savannah River Site
- Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
- Y-12 National Security Complex

What kinds of health data are available?

Occupational medicine departments across the DOE complex routinely collect illness and injury data. When an employee does not report to work for 5 or more consecutive workdays, that employee should be cleared to return to work through the site occupational medicine department before reporting to work (DOE Order 440.1). Information on shorter term health-related absences is also available. Injury and illness data are also linked to occupational information (such as job category and specialized monitoring programs) to evaluate patterns among the work force. The Epidemiologic Surveillance Program collects this information, verifies it, and analyzes it to identify trends of unusual health occurrences.

I thought my medical information was confidential?

DOE takes confidentiality issues concerning worker health very seriously. The information that is analyzed by the Epidemiologic Surveillance Program is not linked to any particular individual by name, Social Security Number, or any other identifiable information. The information that is analyzed is given a special code known only to the site occupational medical staff. Furthermore, analyzed data are presented in a summarized or grouped format.

What happens to my medical information?

The Office of Health Studies supports a data coordinator at participating sites to send information electronically to the data center at the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) located in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. All data are checked for completeness and validity and are stored in secured data files. Preliminary analyses are conducted by ORISE and then sent to epidemiologists in the Office of Health Studies for further evaluation and interpretation.

A summary of the data provided by each participating site is published annually. Epidemiologic Surveillance reports may be viewed and printed from the Office of Health Studies Web site at: www.eh.doe.gov/health/epi/surv.

The surveillance reports are distributed to the occupational medicine departments, site management, safety offices, and worker representatives across the complex. In addition, copies are sent to the DOE public reading rooms.